Glendale Animal Hospital
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Cryptorchidism

(missing testicles)

BASIC INFORMATION

Description
Cryptorchidism is the medical term for one or both testicles ***not*** being present in the scrotal sac. Sometimes called monorchidism (when only one testicle is present), but, as both testicles may be "missing", the general term is preferred.

Testicles may be located very near the scrotum (prescrotal), in the groin (inguinal) or inside the abdominal cavity (abdominal). Testicles should be present by 8 weeks of age although *occasionally* they may appear a bit later in the development of the animal. Dogs and cats are both affected.

Causes
The testicles initially develop near the kidneys then move during development to their rightful position in the scrotum. This failure to make the journey to their rightful home, so to speak, is considered to be a genetic and **heritable** defect. Animals with the defect, if fertile, should not be bred.

The most common breeds affected are small breed dogs, (in some studies over 250% more likely to have the defect) and Chihuahuas, Pomeranians, Shelties, Miniature Schnauzers, Poodles and Yorkies are over-represented. In cats, Persian breeds are most likely to have the defect.

Clinical Signs
The most obvious clinical sign is the absence of one or both testicles. Because retained testicles are usually atrophied, animals with both testes retained will likely be infertile, but if one testicle is in the scrotum the pet will likely be able to produce offspring. Usually there are no other clinical signs until later in life. As these pets age, the retained testicles are far more likely to become cancerous and several types of tumors have been described. Retained testicles, on rare occasions, may also be at risk of torsion (twisting) which can also be quite serious.

Dogs with testicular tumors may show signs of hair loss, breast development, or masses in the groin or abdomen. If a torsion occurs, severe pain and swelling can occur.

Diagnostic Tests
Most of the time the diagnosis is obvious although determination of the location of the missing testicle can be tricky. X-rays or ultrasound could be employed to help the search. On occasion a surprise tumor has been diagnosed at surgery or by cytologic means (biopsy) in dogs or cats thought to be already neutered. Hormonal testing could also be employed.

TREATMENT AND FOLLOW-UP
Because of the heritable nature of the condition and the likelihood of medical complications, these pets should be neutered and never bred. Veterinarians will not "move" the testicle to the proper location as this is considered unethical. The procedure should be routine for skilled vets no matter the location of the retained testicle(s), and complications are typical of any surgery.

Follow-up Care
Normal as if the pet underwent a more-routine neuter.

Prognosis
Excellent if done early in life but still very good even if complications have developed.